

# FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF NEW NATIONALITY EDUCATIONAL POLICY

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In the territories of Eastern Hungary and Transylvania re-incorporated in the dismembered mother country in terms of the Vienna Award, as a consequence of the period at which that Award was announced being separated by a few days only from the period of the autumn school registrations, one of the most urgent tasks confronting the Hungarian Government was the adjustment of educational matters. The change of rule brought about an entirely new situation in the field of school education too; and, until measures can be taken by law to provide for the distribution of schools, the utilisation of buildings and the organisation of the educational administration, the adjustment of educational matters will be provisionally effected on the basis of an Ordinance (No. 24.024 VKM. ex 1940) issued for the purpose by *Dr. Valentine Hóman*, Minister of Public Worship and Education. Apart from a few measures of a general character the Ordinance — which was published in the October 6th., 1940 (No. 227) issue of the „Budapesti Közlöny” or Official Gazette — determines also the fundamental principles of the new Hungarian nationality educational policy.

When Transylvania was wrested from the mother country the tendency in force in the field of education was still that of nationalisation rooted in the liberal conceptions of the Millennium period which had during the two decades preceding the outbreak of the first Great War put the State in possession of hundreds of schools, most of which were Protestant. After the Treaty of Trianon the Rumanian State took over these school buildings; but it failed to fulfil the condition stipulated in writing by the

church communities that the language of instruction should be Hungarian and that the persons employed as teachers should as far as possible be men able also to undertake the functions of precentor. That was why, on February 21st., 1937, *the General Magyar Party of Rumania submitted to the League of Nations a complaint together with an application requesting the fulfilment of the terms of the contracts or the restoration of the buildings and the payment of compensation respectively.*

*The complaint was referred to the Rumanian Ministry for Minorities; but no effective steps to redress the grievance were ever taken either in Geneva or in Bucharest.*

The Ordinance issued by Dr. Hóman — as contrasted with the state of things in force prior to the Treaty of Trianon — endeavours in every respect to maintain and develop the system of denominational schools which has proved so efficient in alleviating the lot of the minorities. § 1. declares that "schools in the re-incorporated territories of Eastern Hungary and Transylvania which in the school-year 1939—40 functioned as State schools shall continue their activity in the school-year 1940—41 as Royal Hungarian State schools", whereas the denominational schools shall continue to retain their character as denominational schools. In villages, however, in which there are both denominational and State schools, the latter shall not begin activity unless the denominational school (schools) is (are) unable to cope with local requirements. Indeed, where the building of the denominational school is not suitable, that school may without charge make use of the building of the State school, while the latter may move to the premises of the denominational school. This measure is particularly justifiable in view of the fact that the Rumanian Minister of Education, *M. Angelescu*, compelled the inhabitants of the villages to build hundreds of up-to-date State schools, appointing to these schools — chiefly in the Székely counties belonging to the "culture zone" — teachers from Old Rumania who received supplementary allowances in addition to their salaries and were entrusted with the work of bleeding the denominational schools and denationalising the pupils. *Schools of this kind thus became nurseries of illite-*

*racy, the Rumanian teachers — who were quite ignorant of Hungarian — being unable to teach the pupils to read and write either in their mother-tongue or in Rumanian. The Magyar villagers will now be in a position to provide for the teaching of their children in their mother tongue and for their receiving ethical training in their own faith in schools built out of the sorely-missed contributions exacted from them.*

What is likely to be the result of this measure from the point of view of the nationalities? During the days of Rumanian rule the Saxons struggled shoulder to shoulder with the Magyars in the cause of the denominational schools; and in most places they displayed an exemplary generosity in creating their own Evangelical schools. Thus, the Saxons too may also obtain the privilege of being able to move to the State schools in villages of mixed Saxon-Rumanian nationality in which those schools are in better repair than the denominational schools. The situation is more acute in the Swabian villages, where the Rumanian State left no stone unturned to re-Germanise the Hungarians of Swabian origin, thereby disrupting the ethnic unity of the Magyars, in the Counties of Szatmár and Szilágy in the Trianon frontier region. We shall see, however, that the Ordinance will bring about an atmosphere of conciliation in respect also of the question of the mother tongue.

After Trianon Rumanian liberalism made the mistake of handing over to the State the majority of the denominational schools; and, just as the Hungarian State schools after the end of the first Great War passed into the possession of the Rumanian State, today the Rumanian State schools are being taken over by the Hungarian State. This does not mean, however, that the Hungarian Government will now import from Trans-Danubia into these re-incorporated territories teachers to be employed for the purpose of making the Rumanian pupils forget their mother-tongue. § 7. of the Ordinance provides that the language of instruction in public elementary schools shall in general be Hungarian, but that where the inhabitants are not Magyars by mother tongue, the teaching in the elementary schools shall be carried on in the language of the inhabitants and in villages with mixed populations in parallel classes or sections or — as the

number of pupils of schooling age may require — in separate schools, in both Hungarian and the non-Hungarian local language respectively. *In public elementary schools where the language of instruction is not Hungarian, the Hungarian language must be taught in an adequate number of hours as an ordinary subject. In public elementary schools of a denominational character the language of instruction shall be appointed by the Church authority maintaining the school in question, though the Hungarian language must be taught here too.*

As we have seen, the Ordinance does not differentiate between denominational and State schools, — that being very different from the tenor of the Rumanian Private Education Law of December 22nd., 1925, which degraded the ancient denominational schools of the Hungarian Churches to the status of private schools, placing them on a level with schools maintained by private individuals which were mere business undertakings and prescribing a lengthy and difficult procedure as a *sine qua non* of the procural of certificates authorising the teachers to function and of the granting of "public school" status. The Rumanian denominational schools already in existence or to be established will therefore be on a footing of equality with the Hungarian schools; and the language of instruction will be determined by the Church responsible for maintaining them. The Hungarian language will be taught in these schools only as an ordinary subject; whereas according to § 29. of the aforementioned Private Education Law, whatever the language of instruction in any given private school, the Rumanian language, the history of the Rumanians and the geography of Rumania are to be taught in Rumanian, while in practice constitutional law was also taught in Rumanian — a circumstance that converted the Hungarian denominational schools into bilingual institutions, although the Minority Treaty concluded in Paris on December 19th., 1919, did not even prescribe the teaching of the Rumanian language in these schools.

§ 7. of the Rumanian State Elementary Education Law of May 27th., 1939, provided that teaching should be carried on in Rumanian in all schools belonging to the State. However, in villages where there are large numbers of minority

citizens and at least 20 pupils of schooling age belonging to the respective minority, minority schools or sections may be established; but in these schools or sections too Rumanian literature, history and geography and elementary law must be taught in Rumanian, although the Minority Treaty made compulsory in minority State schools only the teaching of the Rumanian language. In practice, however, even bilingual State schools in which some Hungarian was taught *in 1936 existed in only 44 places in the country, the Magyar children in other places being taught exclusively in Rumanian from schoolbooks which speak of the Magyars as "mad dogs"*.

The question of the right of selecting schools to be attended is adjusted in § 5. of the Ordinance, in terms of which pupils will in the school-year 1940—41 in general continue their studies in the same schools which they attended in the school-year 1939—40. In villages in which there are both denominational and State schools, pupils must be admitted to the I. class in proportionate ratios. The author of the Ordinance has no desire whatsoever to exact retaliation for the past, and for that reason he has not reversed the measure contained in § 8. of the 1924 Rumanian State Elementary Education Law, which provides that Rumanian parents who have lost their Rumanian mother-tongue may only send their children to Rumanian schools; and the system of "name analysis" of unhallowed memory is now a thing of the past.

§ 8. of the Ordinance ensures non-Magyar pupils of secondary and professional schools and of teachers' training colleges separate schools or parallel sections respectively, the only obligation imposed in return being that the Hungarian language must be taught in seven hours weekly. § 11. of the Rumanian Theoretical Secondary Education Law of November 4th., 1939, also provided that minority secondary schools or sections may be established in places where not less than 30 pupils apply for admission to each class of the lower grade and not less than 25 pupils for admission to each class of the higher grade: but there is only one "gymnasium" of the kind in the country. The teaching of the five Rumanian subjects, however, always required a number of hours weekly in excess of the six foreseen. The

Rumanian authorities abolished the "city" type of school everywhere in the country; but the Hungarian Churches were also allowed to maintain professional schools — agricultural and apprentice schools — subject to the restrictions and on the scale as described above.

In terms of § 13. of the Ordinance the schools are to continue to function on the basis of the syllabuses for the school-year 1939—40, though the Hungarian language and the national Hungarian subjects must be taught in all schools on the basis of a syllabus to be determined at a later date. Though the point is not made in the Ordinance, we know from statements made by the Prime Minister and the Minister of Education that the syllabus has allotted a place to the Rumanian language too. *During the days of Rumanian rule, in the field of public education ignorance of the Hungarian language was regarded as redounding to one's credit. Teachers possessing this distinctive qualification were enticed to the "culture zone" of Széklerland by offers of special "premiums" and grants of land; while the pupils were not allowed to converse in Hungarian even in the ten minutes' intervals between the lessons. The Ministry of Education is now introducing the teaching of the Rumanian language also in the denominational and State schools in which Hungarian is the language of instruction, the reason for that step being that in particular the young men intending to enter the administrative, judicatory and medical professions will not be able to establish immediate contact with the Rumanians under their control in nationality districts unless they are able to speak to them in their mother tongue.*

Ordinance No. 24.024/VKM. ex 1940 of the Minister of Public Worship and Education already foreshadows the outlines of the new Hungarian nationality educational policy. *This educational policy — passing beyond even the principle of reciprocity of the Vienna Award — is not inspired by any desire to retaliate for past injuries, but by the consciousness of the mission defined by St. Stephen, the first King of Hungary, which — apart from ensuring the cultural superiority of the Magyars — aims at making our polyglot country the mother country of all nationalities alike.*